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**WASHINGTON, DC** - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon announced today that programs to help the homeless in Terrebonne, Lafourche, Assumption, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, and St. Mary Parishes will receive \$1,038,605 in funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

**"These federal grants will support programs in south Louisiana that lend a helping hand to some of our most vulnerable neighbors: those who find themselves without a safe place to call home," said Rep. Charlie Melancon. "I am pleased these programs, which all have proven records of success, will receive additional support in their work to help the homeless find permanent residences."**

**"I thank the people behind these organizations for their tireless dedication to serving our citizens who are most down on their luck - especially those who are veterans, victims of domestic violence, or who have disabilities or mental illnesses - and I applaud their efforts to help the homeless in our communities find a secure place to live so they can get back on their feet."**

The grants announced today are funded through HUD's Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance programs. These competitive grant programs provide a range of assistance to homeless persons, including transitional housing, permanent housing, and a variety of supportive services. All of the organizations in south Louisiana awarded grants are part of the Supportive Housing Program section of the Continuum of Care. Funds are awarded in an annual national competition.

The following organizations have been awarded grants through HUD:

**Gulf Coast Teaching Family Service Inc.**, which has an office in **Houma**, will receive a total of **\$405,226**

to fund three of its programs.

The Visions 1 program will receive \$134,350 and the Visions 2 program will receive \$170,723 in grants, both to help provide assistance to mentally and/or physically disabled and homeless people in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. Both programs provide services such as help with locating housing, financial support, and education assistance. The Visions 1 program focuses on helping people between the ages of 18-22, while the Visions 2 program provides assistance to veterans who are 18 or older and are homeless.

The Gulf Coast Teaching Family Service Inc. will also receive \$100,153 in funding for The Network program, which serves the homeless in Assumption, St. James, St. John and St. Charles Parishes, as well as Terrebonne and Lafourche. The Network funds the Region III Homeless Coalition's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), an internet database used by various agencies for referral tracking and case management.

**Start Corporation**, also based in **Houma**, will receive a total of **\$497,221** to fund three of its programs. Start Corporation is a HUD Supportive Housing Program (SHP) that primarily serves people with disabilities who are homeless.

Start Corporation's Program Director, Casey Guidry, says the program began because people were "going in and out of hospitals and not having a place to live, and it was damaging their quality of life."

Start Corporation's "Fresh Start" program will receive \$224,584 to assist with locating and securing housing for people in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes who are homeless and disabled. Guidry said that the Fresh Start program was created to be a "catch-all" for homeless persons in the area.

The Starting Over program will receive \$111,447 in federal funding. Starting Over provides the same services as Fresh Start, but focuses on homeless people who also suffer from severe mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia or bi-polar disease.

Both Fresh Start and Starting Over receive 75% of their funding from HUD, with the remaining 25% coming from community donations.

The Safe Start Supportive Housing program will receive \$161,190 in funding to support services such as rental assistance, skills training, and transportation for the homeless, with a goal of transitioning people to permanent housing situations. Safe Start, which serves people in Terrebonne, Lafourche, and Assumption Parishes, is directed toward people who are mentally and/or physically disabled and have also been victims of domestic violence.

**St. Mary Community Action Association, Inc.**, based in **Franklin**, will receive a total of **\$136,158** in grants to fund its Case Management and Traditional Housing programs that serve people who are homeless in St. Mary Parish.

The Case Management program provides direct assistance to the homeless or near homeless through transportation and employment assistance. The Traditional Housing program provides housing in a controlled environment where rent is subsidized by the association. Program Director Almetra Franklin says the programs focus on "counseling, life skills, financial literacy, and money management."

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